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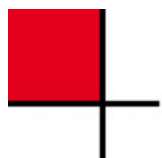
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## Coding gender in academic capitalism\*

Soile Veijola and Eeva Jokinen

### abstract

In this paper, we explore the general societal and political tendency today to encode and digitalise work, production and lived life to as great an extent as possible. We study this by focusing on work at universities where women tend to take care of most of the collective, relational and responsive duties related to knowledge production, education and the working community. We ask, what happens to gender, work and knowledge in the process where academic capitalism decodes the parameters by which the latter three notions are assessed, and evaluated?

### Introduction

We love the Internet, digital media and all the options that techno-social life makes available to us. Our collaboration as academic workers, for instance, has been made possible for decades by email and collective writing platforms. Digital connections are, after all, an important affordance for intellectual work for all

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who have a job far away from the village centres of international academia. Thus, we welcome new digital means and gadgets that enable the ‘general intellect’, a force which Marx (1973) linked to general social and collective intelligence: the productive force of the social brain. According to Virno (2004) and many other scholars, collective intelligence is the main productive force of the post-Fordist society.

Moreover, we have – perhaps naïvely – assumed that the university (as we knew it) supports our work and that all forms of research cooperation (digital, tactile, hybrid) are developed in order to embrace creativity and variations in research and research communities. By university, academia and academic life, we mean the generalised idea of the university as a global site for knowledge and innovation. It is worth mentioning that we have both been working in the privileged universities of the Global North in Northern Europe, studying the social sciences. We have not needed to pay for our education, nor have we really expected to be treated differently because we are women, even if we could see that most of our own professors were men and that there seemed to be a gender issue going on among older generations. We, nevertheless, had high hopes that gender would gradually cease to make any difference in academia, that it would become a mere difference among other differences and would help people to do important and radical things together, not block them.

We can now see how premature these hopes were. We are not witnessing the universities we know, defending their autonomy and duty of critical thinking and supporting people who commit themselves to independent research and passionate teaching. Instead, we see increasing insecurity, a blundering new public management of academic work and individuals who are forced to compete against one another and apply for external funding to do their job: to conduct research. There are endless new, often rather non-organically formed, institutional networks and units rather than inquiring minds in collaboration looking for the realisation of ideas and the empowerment of human beings (see Slaughter and Leslie, 2001; Beverungen, Dunne and Sørensen, 2008; Berglund, 2008). The optimistic ideas of expanded opportunities, on one hand, and the gritty reality around us, on the other, have one thing in common: both are created by the general capitalist tendency to *make life codable* – and thus digital, mobile and fast to travel.

What do we mean by codability? A code has typically meant a system which converts letters, words, gestures, sounds and images into other (e.g. shortened or secret) forms of representation. In contemporary capitalism, coding is often marketed as an objective process that increases accountability, efficiency – even equality – among people. Since capitalism proliferates restlessly to new areas of

life in order to survive and prosper, we witness the capitalisation of public and governmental institutions, universities included, on a global scale.

Making life codable appears to have propelled the university to adopt a new but rigid and unfruitful understanding of itself. Our treatise is thus an effort to understand how and why our academic lives and work are changing. As always, when looking into the taken-for-granted aspects of society, we start with our embodied, and thus inevitably gendered, existence and its significance today. The marriage of gender and general intellect is ambivalent in the coding society. Research, and our own experience, shows that gender still plays a role in work and careers at the university (see e.g. European Commission 2006; Munar et al., 2015; Barrett and Barrett, 2011; Barrett and Barrett 2013; Allen, 1997). Nearly two decades ago, Eileen E. Schell (1998) succinctly depicted academic non-tenure women metaphorically as ‘mother-teachers’.

In feminist social science discourse, gender has been theorised in recent years as ‘a contingent habit’ or ‘embodied performativity’ following the leads of Judith Butler (1990), Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) and many others (e.g. Adkins and Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs, 2001). These dual concepts aim to capture the dynamics of gender in action. Gender works in us, habitually, whether we want it to or not; yet it is also marked by indeterminacy and unruliness since gender habits and gendered structures of action are incessantly open to change and surprise.

On the basis of previous discussions, we recently suggested the concept of ‘the hostessing society’ to account for a contemporary working life that utilises various affective, caring and aesthetic performances of femininity as company assets required from everyone, including men (Veijola and Jokinen, 2008; Veijola, 2009; Jokinen and Veijola, 2012). These are seen as the necessary fabric of the social as well as the economic, yet all the while, they refuse to improve the societal position of actual women. Thus, when hostessing skills are performed by women they tend to become women’s natural traits rather than their tangible skills; they become expectations and obligations that only women encounter. ‘*We seem to have run out of coffee here... Could someone perhaps...?*’

Hostessing is a tangible *skill* and an *act* that is necessary in all contemporary working life, from business-to-business meetings to jobs in the tourism and (other) creative industries – even universities. People, ideas, artworks and artefacts travel smoothly and effectively with the help of institutionalised and individual hostessing skills, creativities and practices. When men hostess, it is often considered a skill, and they get an increase in salary for having ‘a flexible body’ (Martin, 2000). In the contemporary mutation of patriarchy, men are able to claim their workplace identity as their ‘own’ identity rather than having a

hostessing identity naturalised as their innate feature, as is the case with women. A self-identity can then be contracted, exchanged for a better salary and made use of as a labour market resource (Adkins, 1995; Adkins and Lury, 1999.)

Performances of hostessing generally deal with relations. Relational work typically refers to fields of work such as care or hospitality work (see Twigg, 2000; Mol et al., 2010; Hochschild, 1983; Veijola, 2009), however, we argue that it also and most concretely applies to university work. The care sector, the hospitality sector and the university sector are all based on a wide spectrum of collective expertise and the skilful handling of social relations, affects and material conditions in order to generate well-being, happiness or knowledge, for example. All three branches of work are also increasingly encoded, standardised and managed in the name of efficiency, transparency and accountability. Technologies are imposed on all these spheres in a heavy-handed manner – to increase volume and reduce labour costs. However, technology does not seem to be self-sufficient and automatic, judging from the commonly occurring fact of university people using their office hours and even leisure hours to feed codable numeral information into the university's surveillance system; women also occupy precarious jobs more often than their higher-ranked colleagues. *'Would you please be so kind as to fill this for me....?'*

In this article, we combine perceptions of the current tendency to make life generally codable with the idea of the university as a central site in the hostessing society. We want to know what kind of a makeover operation we can perform through the notion of the hostessing society in contemporary working life if we analyse code and coding as its new key constituents. We will look into the ideas, formations and arrangements of gender through the tendencies of contemporary capitalism to decode and recode human life (the relations, vitality and affects between people) in its efforts to increase productivity and efficiency and to control this coding as efficiently as possible.

Here, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005: 8) is helpful. It explicitly recommends standardised educational qualifications to make universities comparable and transferable, have them facilitate and increase mobility between countries and to emphasise research outputs as the standard measure.

'Academic capitalism', the shift towards managerial authority, accountability to economic productivity standards, and quantitative performance auditing, has introduced norms and values that disrupt those of the classic liberal-humanistic university, including its elitist professional authority relations, 'old boy' networks, and internalized disciplinary standards. (Ferree and Zippel, 2015: 561)

The principal mechanism for controlling the possibilities created by coding work performances – that is de- and re-coding the possibilities in the public sphere – is generally called ‘new public management’ (see, e.g. Rose, 1999). This means that at the level of organising work, new public management uses old ideas, such as cutting work processes into bits and pieces, and then reassembles these ideas with new technologies, codes and algorithms to count, measure and value labour performances (see, e.g. Thrift, 2007; Germann Molz, 2011).

The notion of a *gender code* also exists. This is familiar to feminist social theory and refers to a norm or constraint, for instance, in female or male comportment or dressing. Yet, in contemporary capitalism, code and gender code have been installed into yet another position: the labouring and gendered subjects are dissected, dissolved and recombined – coded – into new, often virtual compositions. In this process of dissecting and dissolving the labouring subjects, gender also assumes new forms, meanings and processes of becoming. Human performance, however, in all its details and contexts, is difficult to manage and measure in its finest form. Yet the measuring-standardising-coding activity that produces standardised, codified and commensurable numbers attempts to do this, and the knowledge produced is often the only thing that people and organisations consider to be the real evidence of results or objective outcomes (Lampland and Star, 2009: 10).

We can of course ask whether the digitalisation of the parameters of our existence implies that a thing, a human being or an event only exists if it can be counted. In new public management, which is based on indicators, if something can be measured, then it can be controlled. In order to control something, it has to be measurable (Helén, 2015). In relational work, the equation is, of course, not so simple. Should one count touches or caresses per hour? Instead of objectivity, the issue is essentially about power relations; what and who are coded, who is coding, who is controlling the code, who decides it, who has access to the key of the code, who pays the price for all the coding and who gains from coding.

Therefore, we will focus on the patterns of gender and work in terms of relational work in today’s hostessing society after they have been subject to coding, recoding and decoding. Here, we follow Donna Haraway’s lead in her famous treatise on the codability of life in *A cyborg manifesto* (1991). We argue that coding does not reduce itself merely to converting the practices of doing one’s work well into the accountability, measurability, executability and streamlined efficiency of this doing-well. It also has repercussions for gender and gendered work performances. Working well in any organisation based on relational human activities and cognitive and/or affective performances might actually be hampered when the organisation starts to manage and evaluate itself in terms of

codable indicators and coding logics. We argue that by separating the means, goals and values of relational work from its outcomes, the coding tendencies intertwine with older patriarchal tendencies to extensively exploit women's lives and work in the interest of men and competitive capitalism.

This is not to say that men in university, and outside of it, do not also suffer from neoliberal management. Rather, it is the structural position of men that is different, given the disproportionate number of women in the contemporary university working as adjuncts, part-timers and running between teaching jobs as a precarious, flexible, powerless and cheaper workforce, while the share of men in full professorships is over 75 percent in EU 27 countries; a similar pattern prevails outside European countries (see Nikunen, 2014; Huisman, de Beer, Dill and Souto-Otero 2015: 570-571; ERA Progress Report 2017: 17-19). The new situation runs the risk of making women's position even more difficult than in the old patriarchal – and fraternal – academia.

Critically inspecting coding capitalism is worthwhile for yet another reason. It allows us to theorise the possibilities of post-binary, post-human actions in future society, which is of concern to us all. How can we decipher and cultivate the human condition without resorting to traditional gendered agencies, on one hand, or to mere virtual compositions without gender, which coding capitalism turns us into, on the other? Is there another or third way to understand and live a life in relation to gender and digitalisation?

## Codability of life and work

Codification conventionally refers to the ways in which a universe of objects, relations and events is rendered into communicable symbols. Codes, in other words, (inter)mediate events and signs, worlds and cultures. According to Mackenzie and Vurdubakis (2011: 5), the various meanings of codes in everyday language include a written system of laws, communication codes from language to ciphers, DNA-instructions and written or unwritten rules of conduct. In modernity, code has become the ubiquitous manifestation of the presumption that, in principle, all things are cognisable; the age-old question of *being* turns into a question of *how we know* (Bryan, 2010). It is self-evident that code has also been part of programming and software terminology in information and communication technologies. It has been used to refer to communication, both open and secret (e.g. in the sectors of intelligence and security services).

The key use of the term has however been in its identification as 'the execution of a sequence of pre-scripted operations' (Mackenzie and Vurdubakis, 2011: 5)

exemplified especially by machines. Moreover, as Haraway (1991) noted in *A cyborg manifesto*, contemporary forms of knowing, from computer and communication sciences to modern biology, involve a common move: the translation of the world into a problem of coding.

Technological determination is only one ideological space opened up by the reconceptions of machine and organism as coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world. (Haraway, 1991: 152)

Coded processes thus deal with the transactions and flows of digital data across coded infrastructures.

The word *data* is interesting. Coding assumes that there is data out there, something that is simply there. In Latin, data means given. In contrast, one could also lean on another term, *capta*, which means taken: something is being produced through, say, investigation; it is *taken* out of reality and therefore invested with perspectives and interests. *Capta* is situated, partial and constitutive, while data is, seemingly, just there. We can see that the relation between coding and data is a match made in heaven: both appear to be objective and universal; and when acting together, they seem to promise to deliver no less than objective facts (Kitchin and Dodge, 2011).

So what is simply given and what is taken out of reality when the outcomes of an activity are created through relations between people? For instance, when the offering that is being pursued includes care, trust or hospitality – which need to be co-produced, co-experienced and given meaning together – decoding and recoding thus constitute performative action, produced and mediated by power relations, rather than a mere operation of systematic calculation. Coding rationality has personal, communal and material preconditions and consequences.

Code, in other words, is the language of machines, yet its impacts reach far beyond them; ‘So many situations today become tractable and manageable (and also in-tractable and un-manageable) by virtue of their code-ability’, state Mackenzie and Vurdubakis (2011: 4). The codes that we adapt to and accept reveal the ways in which the will-to-power and the will-to-knowledge tend to be enacted in the contemporary world. Thus, the growth of techniques and practices, for example, generating, designing and commodifying codes (in software or open source), has supported the formalisation of practices. These formalisations, for their part, have emphasised ‘the performativity of code, its apparent ability to “make things happen”’, as Mackenzie and Vurdubakis (2011: 6) maintain.



Hayles (2005: 40) argues, in a book *My mother was a computer* that our understanding of speech and writing in general is deeply influenced by the pervasive use of coding, which thus has metaphysical implications. Codes have become part of everyday life; they are included in everything. They hold the promise of efficiency and results today. They carry the weight of what used to be about performative acts of cognitive excellence. The latter is now lifted from the shoulders of human beings and turned into the quantitative requirements of achieving the calculated number of scientific publications per administrative unit, to be coded into score-keeping registers. The importance of ground-breaking research-based knowledge in these publications has been surpassed by their quantified comparability in compiling lists of top-ten and top-hundred scholars in each research field. In the discourse of forward-looking nations, the comparability of quantities in every line of work/production has become the driver of national economies.

Yet a further perspective on coding is offered by Papadopoulos et al. (2008: 252), who argue that capitalism is currently not at all interested in the links between (individual) subjects, agency and power – as it once was – but instead in dissecting and dissolving the working subject and recombining it into new and productive virtual compositions. In Deleuze's (1995) view, societies of control are what results when populations meet code in the era of informational capitalism; when population turns into 'the set of entities whose properties or behaviours are [sampled] and estimated by various means', which for its part disassembles and reassembles societies by means of 'numerical language[s] of control' (Mackenzie and Vurdubakis, 2011: 8-9). Capitalism is simply a generalised decoding of flows; and to code desire – and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows – is the business of the socius (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 139).

Papadopoulos et al. (2008: 252) even maintain that, apparently, individual bodies *are* in fact codes:

The individual body only looks like an individual in its apparent bodily shape, but in reality it becomes a genetic source, an automated client, a host to a virus, a set of competences, a self-creating assemblage of skills, a register and a code, a body capable of extreme mobility, an actant in a colony of stem cells. (Papadopoulos et al., 2008: 252)

For Haraway (1991), the new role of code is described as a process in which human beings and their natural and social worlds are transformed into a reserve (standing resource), similar to natural resources, and amenable to decoding and recoding, investing and exchange. Our bodies and interrelations become central to value creation, and codes that can captivate and recode our bodies and interrelations become a defining discourse of our time. Codes offer both

explanation and salvation to every possible problem. For example, if an institution, or a certain practice in an institution, is flawed, one can simply rewrite the code and re-execute (Berry and Pavlik, 2005: 1). The desire of many universities to periodically 'restructure' their activities fittingly demonstrates this point.

In global cognitive capitalism, the flagship role of the code has extended itself to almost everyone's life, and this is also the case in academic capitalism. Academic communities, like any other field, face the outcomes of the global transformation of working life and the mechanisms of value production such as the formalisation and execution of the coding of human action, including relationalities between humans, machines and environments. Academic workers are transformed into a human and hybrid resource that is amenable to coding and recoding, sets of competences, commensurable indicators and coded desires. The logics of the codability of life, labour and love may however not reach (measure and recode) some of the 'source-codes' of academic communities: those of caring, sharing, helping, learning, advising and knowing together. This is also a gender issue.

### **Hostessing in coding capitalism**

For women in particular, the dynamics of coding capitalism in academia have three key features: it simultaneously exploits and dismisses women's work; it gives women more work without more pay; and it annuls the university as one of those workplaces in which equality has had a comparatively good chance of being achieved. When looking back at our own careers as faculty members and full professors, as well as the memories of our colleagues (e.g. Koski and Tedre, 2003: 23), we can sign under all these points in numerous situations. For instance, keeping an eye on things and taking care of repetitive tasks and the smoothness of departmental operations are being demanded from us while knowing that 'personal experience, a gut feeling or embodied knowing are not constituted as knowledge, as science' (Koski and Tedre, 2003: 30), that is, an accountable aspect of work. Let us, however, try to articulate these statements in academic language.

First, current coding capitalism both exploits and dismisses hostessing skills. Hostessing is excluded from the countable outcomes of relational work (which is the status of most fields of work in one way or another). The process of codification of work enables new forms of separation of work from its outcomes as well as from its doers, continuing and solidifying age-old capitalist ways of organising work. The actual relational and embodied work with other human

beings can supposedly be detached from what is understood as the product and productivity of this line of work (cured patients, happy tourists, smart students, brilliant papers), even if it is this very embodied and relational work that actually produces the targeted outcomes and deliverables of the particular field (Jokinen and Veijola, 2012).

Put differently, current capitalism, in its cognitive and post-Fordist mutation (Moulier Boutang, 2011), intensifies and appropriates the very constituents of work in the hostessing society: the performances of femininity that were once and still are unacknowledged when performed by women. Only now they go unacknowledged on yet another level – hostessing – as with all relationality and its situational, tacit and borderless nature, it lacks proper boxes to tick and is left outside of codable data. Hostessing, expected from women more readily than from men, thus becomes the immanent fabric for producing and circulating value in a process in which both agency and credit are denied from those who take, or are given, responsibility for relations between people.

Second, in new public management, the ones who take care of, or are expected to take care of, hostessing work also have to do extra work that is codable in order to be acknowledged as a worker. This means extra shifts for women, after taking care of the administrative, tutoring, nurturing and bureaucratic tasks that commonly pile up on their way (e.g. Haynes and Fearful, 2008). Meanwhile, the decoding and recoding of work in the form of filling time-use reports, etc. adds to, rather than decreases, one's workload and thus hardly enables anyone to be more effective at work. The consequences of this hit women harder than men in relational work even if the overall necessity to cope with the multiple chores of codification logics also concerns men. Patients, customers or students have to be taken care of, just like before, in addition to filling in the reports of this taking care of, as Hirvonen (2014) demonstrated in her study on the agency of welfare service workers. In a very different scene of management and business faculties, put on display by Flynn, Cavanagh and Bilimoria (2015: 40), we learn that '[m]ale faculty may be more likely to obtain tenure given their disparity relative to women in terms of research productivity and in time spent on fulfilling teaching/advising and university service responsibilities'. The allocation of faculty time by sex turns women easily into 'maternal figures', while men fall more easily into the role of 'a busy and absent fatherly figure' who are allowed to stay away from the humdrum of everyday life of care-giving.

In much knowledge work as well as in most forms of hostessing, that which cannot be coded is exactly what the work is about. Yet, only the codable *counts* when listing the outcomes of work, while only the uncodable *matters* when evaluating the quality of the same work. It is impossible to code an entire

hostessing process that glues together the skills of being, relating and working with other people.

Third, the university constitutes one of the fields, which, at least in principle, offer women and men equal opportunities to pursue a career and strive for excellence. Bodily strength, social status, marital status, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation or even looks do not matter in the performance of scholarship. It is also one of the most illuminating examples of all three constitutive aspects of hostessing – cognitive, relational and hospitable – intertwined in contemporary globalised and mobilised working life. However, the opposite is a lived reality, practically everywhere in the academic world, and not easily addressed in all-male or mostly-male faculties. In addition to being a ‘highly gendered institution with a concentration of women in teaching-only, insecure roles’ (Marchant and Wallace, 2013, cited in Mair and Frew, 2016: 3) universities worldwide have not made a collective effort to change the situation.

Academic work taps and leans on gendered performances of femininity such as social and language skills, yet it advertises the performances of individualistic masculinity as the actual source of academic profiling and branding, for instance, in universities’ public announcements of conferences (see Munar et al., 2015). Finnish political scientist Saara Särnä’s famous tag, *Congrats! You have an all-male panel!*, with David Hasselhoff giving a thumbs-up to all-male gatherings on stage, has drawn international attention to this phenomenon, and deservedly so (Särnä, 2016). Speculatively, we could draw a connection between the overrepresentation of men on conference podiums and the ethnographic results of a university setting by Rebecca Lund (2015). Lund draws the conclusion that, unlike for women, it is legitimate for and even expected of men that they trumpet their achievements on every occasion and can use ‘big talk’ of themselves as a resource.

When coding capitalism invades all the activities of knowing, relating and welcoming that academic life and productivity rest on, it participates in the maintenance of existing traditional gender hierarchies and annuls women as academics. Thus, gender order and gender hierarchy are simultaneously enforced on two levels: as traditional, even if contested, gendered agencies, on one hand, and as coded and dispersed outcomes of measurable data that does not accurately measure women’s work, on the other.

Producing, renewing and testing academic knowledge leans on collective, communal, virtual and person-to-person collaborations in the search for solid and valid knowledge that benefits society and the Earth. We can thus see that productivity in the university is already defined on false premises (data instead of

capta), even before its codable dimensions are chosen. Academic work is first de-collectivised, then the decodings and recodings of the apparently objective data are executed, after which the results of this operation are made public as objective evaluations of individual and institutional academic performance serving science and the wider society.

Thus, academic brainwork is polarised by the current capitalist patriarchy in which non-codable and non-spectacular work should preferably be deposited on other people's shoulders – to people standing on a lower rung in the organisational hierarchy. These people are often women with precarious jobs.

Is it possible to avoid 'the academic scissors', the fact that women are producing a substantial number of PhD degrees, but after this stage, their numbers in the academic workforce decrease (Flynn, Cavanagh and Bilimoria, 2015)? The remnants of the old gendered hierarchical ideological code remain strong, whereby women are more likely to be involved in teaching than men. Throughout the EU 27, only 10% of universities are headed by women. Models of leadership are not inclusive of women (*She Figures*, 2009; Huisman, de Beer, Dill and Souto-Otero 2015: 570-579; ERA Progress Report 2017: 17-19). If we widen the scope of our perspective from gender to other powerful assemblages of intersectional differences, such as ethnicity, indigeneity, sexuality, able-bodiedness and age, we can see how much there is to take care of for 'the maternal figures' of faculties when it comes to supporting students who find academic culture to be an intimidating or chilly environment (McCall, 2005; Smooth, 2016; Berger and Guidrog, 2009). Coding capitalism does not seem to change the imbalance; instead, it seems to strengthen gender as a social organiser.

But is it possible for a third alternative to emerge out of the double-bind created by the coding academy? Can we find a thread of positive potentiality in all this? Could coding have, despite all said so far, a liberating impact on women's situation? Thus, when gender is absorbed into the overall substance of work outcomes, without articulating or separating care and hospitality within it, and when all this is being subject to codification, can new constellations and configurations of subjectivity – gendered or non-gendered – be generated? The chances are not high, but it certainly is worth looking into gender theory and its links to codes once more to find out.

## Gender as effect of coding

Gender composes a basis for human conduct. It is a social contract and thereby a normative code, yet also changeable. It is a binary code machine that models our behaviour, but it is simultaneously, for the time being, a means of gaining subjectivity. The workings of the deep-rooted structures of a gender code are manifest everywhere, from language to toilet doors. However, gender theory, biology and life itself have already problematised the idea of a gender dichotomy in myriad ways. Gender is factually not a code of either-or; it is also in-between or both. Yet it cannot be ignored or escaped as a point of reference in anyone's life. For instance, new-born babies are coded in almost every country of the world as either a girl or a boy.

Thus far, there are three aspects of codes that are relevant to the making of gender theory. The first was worded in social theory as the conventional gender code by Erving Goffman in his famous analysis *The arrangement between the sexes* (1977):

In modern industrial society, as apparently in all other [as such in which], sex is at the base a fundamental *code* in accordance with which social interactions and social structures are built up, a *code* which also establishes the conceptions individuals have concerning their fundamental human nature. (Goffman 1977: 301, italics added by authors)

These codes are embedded into Western modernisation and the idea of the nuclear family, which is tightly linked with Fordist production and industrial capitalism. Gender roles are taken as natural and given. Due to the inertia of habit and patriarchal power relations, conventional gender codes are still effective today, even if gender is no longer entirely controlled by these, especially in Western cultures (Adkins, 2003; Jokinen and Veijola, 2012; Adkins and Jokinen, 2008; McNay, 1999).

The second link between code and gender lies in women's uncoded productivity, discussed in the previous sections: standardisation based on the *decoding* of work but skipping the part of labour that *recodes* it into double or triple shifts. On top of the previous aspects, there is a third aspect in the way that codes and gender relate to one another, which is activated pointedly by neoliberal capitalism. This is the merging of the old gendered divisions of labour and the gendered access to control management processes. Let us take a typical case story: universities spend huge amounts of money on new coding systems to help control productivity, strategy, process description and process monitoring, as well as the maintenance and updating of these processes. The companies selling these coding tools to the new management, to borrow a popular phrase, laugh all the

way to bank, while the working conditions at universities become increasingly challenging for those who want to get their work, not only monitored and coded, but also done well.

Thus, the business idea behind many software businesses lies in the in-built necessity to correct errors in programmes and systems after clients have started to use them; this means that people working in the ICT sector earn money from university workers' extra performances when the latter test, use and send in complaints about the problems they find in the half-finished programmes. Engineers and other technology professionals (mostly men)<sup>1</sup> are planning, building and selling – as well as ordering – tools for coding that do not work properly but which also do not meet the reality of hostessing practices such as care and hospitality (performed mostly by women). Codability therefore cuts into gendered power hierarchies, which thus becomes capitalised along with other aspects of knowledge production.

The fourth aspect is however the most interesting and promising. The discourse and ideology of the codability of life (Haraway, 1991; Bryan, 2010; MacKenzie and Vurdubakis, 2011) has started to seriously challenge the discourse of individual agency engendered through power relations (Papadopoulos et al., 2008), as we are used to understanding it in critical social theory. This calls for an updated understanding of gender and gendered agency in contemporary capitalism.

As Haraway (1991) has noted, many of the developments in science and technology challenge the idea of an individual and autonomous subjectivity. They open up ways to assemble and reassemble the capacities of human beings and bring them together with machines and programmes, thereby disassembling individual agency as well as bringing up new hybrid subjects. Moreover, the significance of relational and affective labour and service production in current cognitive capitalism emphasises the performances of co-experiencing, co-inventing, co-feeling and co-knowing (Moulier Boutang, 2011; Dowling et al., 2007; Morini and Fumagalli, 2010) and thus forces us to rethink the borders and boundaries of an autonomous agency. Agency becomes hybrid and collective, technological and shared, porous and fluid; this is, in many ways, different from the autonomous and liberated model man of modernist social and economic thinking (Adkins, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Jokinen, 2016).

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1 According to EU statistics, 9.2% of the male population (16-64 years) with university studies or more have undertaken studies in math, statistics, computing and engineering, whereas the score for women was 2.84 (Women active in the ICT sector 2013: 88-89).

But how keenly should women of our generation, for instance, anticipate hybrid and collective agencies to replace singular and gendered ones as the assemblage of a general intellect? What would hybrid work and hybrid care look and feel like, and how would they turn into resourceful and efficient research and education in the future? Can matters of care be weaved into the textures of academic practice (see Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011) as their inherent, general features rather than as unacknowledged hostessing work by women?

### **Caring for the coding university**

Having worked in universities since the early 1980s, we have witnessed the change in our working environment from a global and mobile rhizome of academic communities in cultural, feminist and critical social sciences to a hierarchical conglomerate made of administrative units steered by political fashions and short-term national or regional economic interests.

Despite this, academic life hosted by universities (albeit nowadays only half-heartedly) still consists of people collaborating with one another in myriad ways: from the tiny helpful gesture with a reference to serious participation in a large research project. Scientific communities are all about relationalities, for better or worse.

It now appears that relationalities have been reduced to relations between institutions of knowledge production. The key correspondence between research units and their largely externalised funding authorities increasingly takes place between their administrative bodies. The role of the actual researcher is to function as a personal CV to be judged by its length – one more token of individualised excellence.

Concepts like gender, as a contingent habit and an embodied performance, catch one side of these developments: women continue to tender, take care, organise, make coffee, keep an eye on things and do double or triple shifts, since it follows the binary code of conduct in the patriarchal society, which includes academia. Women follow it since it would be cumbersome to continuously whine about it. Moreover, most of the time, the gendered division and hierarchy of labour are taken for granted to such an extent that it would require endless extra time to identify the levels and the numerous banal details of its exploitative aspects.

We coined the term ‘the hostessing society’ as a reminder that there is always already in any known society a question of care and reproductive work; we wanted to point out the societal (what sociologists used to call structural) layers of caring and hostessing. We have seen that contemporary capitalism is very quick



and good at embracing hostessing skills and gendered bodies, including the useful images of them. What we now witness is that capitalism is extremely quick and good at also embracing the new possibilities created by digital technologies as well as the devices designed to control and govern the human action enabled by them. In other words, tracing systemic, gendered and power-related patterns in both hostessing and encoded capitalism gives us a kaleidoscopic view on the processes of knowledge production in the university.

The implementation of so-called new public management has led to rigid straightforwardness in the performance and development of science. The tools and means of coding as the core performances of the university – such as endless codes of conduct, process flowcharts, working time tracking, revenue generation models based on ‘products’ such as publications (valued on the basis of often irrational and randomly indicated ‘quality’), graduated students and the amount of external funding – are in clear disagreement with the very idea of universities as sites of creative and collaborative research and teaching.

We can see how decoding and recoding patterns have started to modify academic work performances into more calculable forms instead of boosting general intellect, innovativeness and prosperity for all. The misalignment or even conflict between the ideas of independent academia and new public management makes automated, mechanical ‘clearings’ (see Germann Molz, 2014: 25) in space rather than creating new openings for vital and intellectual processes. Thus, even if universities were trading their offerings on an open market – as one wishes they would in new public management – there is a problem. Their offerings are not countable items. Moreover, even more problems would follow since universities, quite simply, are not enterprises.

There seems to be a calibration problem: a blurring of means and ends (Lenglet, 2011: 62). Furthermore, the growing interest in manufacturing new coding programmes, the algorithms that direct them, and in giving the power to code working performances to these algorithms, may reconfigure the nature of academic exchanges and markets: universities that have both the ability to develop the adjacent machines and the financial resources to deploy the fastest and most intelligent systems in them are praised as the best in terms of ‘making a healthy profit’ – as a phrase in the language of new public management goes.

The fantasy of making the whole of life codable, measurable, improvable, marketable and governable masks the fact that not a single mutation of capitalism has survived without care and the performance of reproduction. Let us not forget that even the university cannot cope without care. If all those people

whose thinking capacities form the scientific intellect of the university stopped caring about their Alma Mater, it would most certainly fail.

## Conclusion

Unravelling the elementary performances and relations in the ubiquitous 'social factory' (Gill and Pratt, 2008) called the university in the way we have done here gives us a contour drawing of academic work in coding and hostessing capitalism. It displays the unholy alliance between gender and care in the university, which has increasingly become a sphere in which women carry a multiplying and intricate workload of cognitive, social and emotional performances based on the various and contradictory requirements for, and criteria of, success in the new university. Women are also the ones who pay the price for the extra shifts they do; there is no promotion based on multitasking, rather the reverse. As Babcock et al (2017) point out, the so called low-promotability tasks (service instead of research) are both suggested to and accepted by women more often than men in faculty environments. This has an effect on women's careers, as it always does when women's hostessing work is taken for granted but not acknowledged.

What would happen if we all did what Eric Barker suggested in his column in *The Week* in admiration of Cal Newport, a professor who wants to 'be the most productive person in your office' and 'do very few things, but be awesome at them'? That is, 'do less shallow work, focus on the deep stuff'. For Newport, 'shallow work is little stuff like emails, meetings, moving information round' (Barker, September 18, 2014). So, no more emails at all by anyone? Problem solved?

Turning the course of social transformation towards a technology-intensive society is difficult for a number of reasons. Naturally, we do not want to reject machines, network computers, programmes and codes that connect people, 'equip and extend our brains' (Moulier Boutang, 2011: 36), take care of heavy, dirty and dangerous labour and very often provide us with a platform for taking care of others and doing the necessary hostessing work in academia and elsewhere. However, we want to change the ways in which the decoding and recoding processes are put to work and used as grounds for evaluation and comparison, which in turn invoke both old binary gender codes and new vicious circles of exploiting women's labour and embodied capacities. The objectives of the encoding processes are, by definition, to become the 'fastest, most accurate, and most efficient' (Trogeman, 2012: 41). However, 'fast', 'accurate' or 'efficient' are not self-evident attributes; they are relative and arguable judgements.

By way of ending our account, let us imagine three alternative futures for us and our university with the help of three figures that show that there have also been earlier vigorous paradigmatic breakings and that ‘gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depths’ (Haraway, 1991: 180).

The Harawayan cyborg, familiar from the 1980s, reminds us of the fact that the new hybrid agencies are not innocent; neither were they born in a beautiful garden, starting immediately to seek a unitary identity. ‘Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment’ (Haraway 1991: 180). Even more accurately: our machines, algorithms and codes are not *its*. They are not wild objects to be animated, worshipped or dominated. They are *us*, *ours*, *our* processes. Therefore, they are not responsible for all the madness we see around us; they do not dominate or threaten us. It is *we* who are responsible for all the boundaries we encounter; as Haraway states, ‘*We are they*’ (1991: 180).

In a similar manner, yet in a more post-human language, Rosi Braidotti (2013) welcomes into our dreams and scenes the figure of the post-human. ‘Life is passing and we do not own it, we just inhabit it, not unlike time-share location’, and the figure of the post-human resists the ‘inhuman(e) aspects of our era’ (Braidotti, 2013: 133, 3). The figure of the post-human is about the affirmation of differences. It is a possibility to develop new, unknown but imaginable subjectivities, to embrace post-human ethics and construct affirmative post-humanist politics (Braidotti, 2013: 45). It helps to work towards alternative futures by embracing – instead of fleeing – new possibilities for hybrids of humans and computers. For Braidotti (2013: 178), the digital humanities in particular have the resources, and perhaps also the power and strength, to rethink our technological condition. Surely, the proper subject for the humanities is no longer ‘man’ but various aspects and transformations localised in the figure of ‘the post-human’. Haraway (2016), around the next corner, tops this by suggesting that we should replace the term post-human with *compost*. It is a compost, which brings together and changes everything added to it; it gets hot and nourishes.

That said, the potentialities of these figures are lost if we allow academic striving for new knowledge, as well as women’s hostessing duties and skills, to become side-lined in post-academic, post-human and post-gender codifications of academic performance. Post-human bodies, whether they are hybrid, collective and part of the general intellect, affects and relations, do not exist without the responsiveness and reciprocities of bodies being-with and dwelling-with in material spaces and local places.

Let us audit one more figure. This one embraces plurality in a proper, ontological, ethical and epistemological way. The figure we suggest is that of *The campers*, a hybrid, social and embodied academic agency of authorship, perhaps with a specification such as ‘The Campers There-and-There-Then-and-Then’, thus also inviting the spaces and timeframes devoted to academic collaboration to be part of the authorship (as they often are).

Consequently, instead of listing and ordering staff members according to their individual achievements, there will be a gender-and-hierarchy-free collectivity producing joint results of its work, a collective that also rotates its caring and publishing duties annually or biannually.

Moreover, the ethos behind The Campers would ally with machines by way of creating the most innovative, disturbing and unforeseeable thinking. Here, even the most skilful coders are unable to programme a machine to simulate a non-routine task by following a scripted procedure; but they can programme a machine to master a task by studying successful examples of this task that have been carried out by others (Autor, 2015: 25). Thus, machines (if made clever) can expand the brains and memory of thinking and acting academic collectives. Importantly, machines can assist us, with their endless power and capability to master huge amounts of data in demonstrating that there really are tacit and relational dimensions in academic performances of general intellect and that these dimensions are vital in all forms of meaningful knowledge production.

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